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**Commission on the Status of Women**
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**Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century": implementation of strategic objectives and action in the critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives: the role of men and boys in achieving gender equality**

## Statement submitted by National Council for Women of Catalonia, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 25 July 1996.

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## Introduction

At the start of this century and in all areas of society, women are still strongly determined to fight for and towards a reduction in the inequality they experience compared with men in the social, political and economic arena, among others. The questioning of the hegemony of male power as hegemonic, as well as the strengthening and acknowledgement of their rights as people/citizens, form part of this fight, challenging the traditional models of male/female relationships.

Consequently, the National Council for Women of Catalonia, a non-governmental organisation recognised as a special consultative entity by the Economic and Social Council, bringing together 150 organisations with over 30,000 women, in the 48th session of the Committee on the Legal and Social Condition of Women, expresses its concern for the deficient understanding of equality between men and women and the lack of political will and real tools to establish true gender equality, as well as the lack of strategy implementation in the areas of primary socialisation where male rights are constructed, including a resistance to change towards the acceptance of equality between sexes.

## The role of men in gender equality.

Procedures and their strategies must also be included along with the considerations and facts to be taken into account concerning male resistance to change towards an active militancy in gender equality,. This leads us to refer not only motivations but also to interests, since inequality always goes hand in hand with satisfaction and the defence of some (men), producing dissatisfaction in others (women).

Resistance to change, i.e. accepting and practising equality between men and women on the part of men, may be understood as the successful defence of male interests and these may be better appreciated by observing the rights granted to men by a culture.

The rights of "men" that are still being consolidated and developed via the status quo, such as the gender-based division of labour, are well accepted by men given that they never call for their transformation, so we may conclude that they are interested in keeping the benefits provided by this division for themselves. And these benefits, which men maintain and monopolise, consist of a series of material, social and emotional rights and advantages guaranteed to them by the gender-based division of labour.

Present-day society still legitimises and accepts all these as "male" and not female rights. Already when they are young, men therefore learn to perceive these benefits as a "natural right", feeling legitimised from the socialisation process to oppose anything that may be an obstacle to exercising this right.

Social legitimisation and the everyday application of these rights begins at an early stage, when the process of socialisation is starting in children.

As a result of the above, we feel there is still real inequality between men and women in the great majority of countries. As already mentioned, this inequality is constructed as a "natural right" with multiple prerogatives. And, as happens with all prerogatives of dominant groups in society, these exclusive rights are not always visible to those who exercise them (men as a dominant group). This lack of perception of their privileges means that these dominant groups are only aware of

their own problems, while undervaluing the injustice and inability of the dominated groups (women) to exercise rights.

## Recommendations and strategies to guarantee gender equality.

As an integral part of the good management of democracy and human rights, governments need to implement and develop real policies guaranteeing gender equality.

To this end it is not only necessary to focus observation on the structural and historical causes behind a lack of change but to also think about how this situation has been perpetuated. This does not only involve ordering the study of the construction of male subjectivity but also how to deconstruct this subjectivity and how to dissemble the everyday strategies of resistance to change, looking for those aspects that lead to the discovery of how and why men should renounce their monopolistic rights from an early age and should accept and fight for gender equality, knowing that, at the moment, the future of equality between men and women at an everyday level is still not guaranteed but needs to be constructed. For this to happen motivations must be created so that men accept and fight for real equality, since it is true that change is possible but nothing can make change happen unless, one by one, men are willing to accept real equality and want to take the initiative in constructing more equal and fairer links with women.

To bring about the real right to equality between men and women, social and particularly political strategies need to be developed that help men to develop new non-patriarchal interests.

These strategies, which governments must necessarily support, have to allow men to develop different values and redefine their current ones, different to those authoritative values of hegemonic masculinity, without them losing, in themselves, their own value as a man/person.

We therefore ask governments to stimulate justice and mutual respect as values encouraging real change towards equality between men and women from the socialisation of children, promoting and adopting political, social and cultural measures that permit the real practice of true gender equality, as well as the exercising of human rights.